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LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE FOR V CORPS MILITARY POLICE IS REAL TRAINING FOR 'REAL DEAL'

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BAUMHOLDER, Germany -- A convoy of four Humvees and a fifth vehicle laden with fuel slowly snakes its way through a forest of tall pines. As they leave the woods the sound of automatic weapons fire cuts the stillness of the crisp spring day.

Soldiers from

Headquarters and Headquarters

Detachment of V Corps' 92nd

Military Police Company are under attack.

The convoy halts and the MPs

quickly spring from their vehicles

and return fire.



IGNACIO 'IGGY' RUBALCAVA

An observer/controller keeps a close watch on operations during a convoy live-fire exercise by Soldiers of V Corps' 92nd Military Police Company.

This is the real deal. The Soldiers are real and their weapons and ammunition are real.

The only thing that's not real is the enemy -- a series of pop-up targets on Range 11.

This was the first phase of a day and night convoy live-fire exercise to prepare the unit for deployment. The exercise is a prerequisite before heading "downrange."

Because live ammunition was used, safety played a critical role. "We have a lot of control measures in place. There are observer/controllers in every vehicle for command and control," said Sgt. 1st Class Riki Hawk, the company's operations officer.

"The OCs ensure that Soldiers come out of their vehicles properly; (that) weapons are pointed downrange safely, and that the weapons are placed on safe. Each OC watches his own vehicle, and we have one OC that is responsible for the entire convoy," said Hawk.

The entire convoy exercise has seven engagements, four during the day and three at night.

Capt. Jeffrey Searl, the 92nd commander, said the training should prepare his troops for the REAL real deal.

"When we deploy, the Soldiers can expect a very demanding environment; a combat environment that obviously provides challenges of its own. By having this training here and by us running it, we know the specific environment that we're going into. And we know the challenges that we'll be facing in that environment ... we have the ability to replicate that environment and provide the Soldiers this training, which is just a great opportunity."

"The interesting thing is that the Soldiers are putting their heart and soul into this exercise. When I went through the Gulf War, it was different. We were just hard-charging, and we knew where our enemy was. But now our enemies are doing anything they can to destroy us, and that's why we're training these guys the way we are," said Hawk.

"When we did our first convoy live-fire, it was generic for all the units. Here we can tailor it to what our unit needs and to the strengths and weaknesses of our Soldiers, so we have more of a hands-on approach," said Searl.

The best training environment is one that simulates the real thing as much as possible, and that's what the convoy exercise is providing the MPs. "They have the opportunity to go out there and get the feel for the battlefield so they can understand what they might encounter if we come into combat. They know what to expect, what the battlefield will look like, and what it will sound like," said Searl.



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A Soldier from V Corps' 92nd Military Police Company trains his weapon downrange and prepares to return fire during a convoy live-fire exercise.

Another benefit of the exercise is the quality time that Soldiers spend with their weapons, Hawk said. "It gives our Soldiers trigger time. They get to get familiar with their weapons. It's not like on a typical range where you're only firing at a paper target or anything like that. Our Soldiers are getting used to their weapons and firing," said Hawk.

When the 92nd MPs deploy to Afghanistan they will face an elusive enemy. "The number-one killer we're going to have in Afghanistan is going to be complacency. To prevent that, we're going to train the same as if we were going to Iraq or anywhere else," said Hawk.

"The missions might differ a little bit, but the techniques from the combatants are certainly going to be the same. You know, improvised explosive devices on the side of the road, rocket-propelled grenades, or vehicle-borne IEDs, whatever it is we're still going to treat it the same way, especially for the missions on convoys," said Hawk.

Privates and privates first class made up the bulk of the Soldiers who were brushing up on convoy operations. Hawk said there's a reason for that.

"We put so much on our Soldiers. Our E-1s through E-3s train like E-5s or skill level two," said Hawk.

He explained that the accelerated training combined with their law enforcement mission produces a Soldier who is able to read things a little quicker.

"MPs do their mission all the time, protecting the community and the garrison, so we take a lot of those skills to the battlefield and we use them there," said Hawk.

"And because we have a Pfc. doing the community law enforcement mission, they're taking charge of a real situation, whether it's a traffic accident, domestic violence or whatever it is, it's real.

"They carry a weapon and they have ammunition with them and that's every day. So we have to keep them trained on the next level all the time," he said.

Hawk explained the MP training mentality by saying, "The thing that makes us who we are is that we're so standards-based. There is a standard and you achieve it. If you don't, then we're going to continue training you until you meet it, and that's just our mentality. We're real aggressive on training properly. And once you get there properly, we'll take it to the next level."

